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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7940th meeting
Tuesday, 16 May 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/387, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: The Security Council has before it the report (S/2017/387) of the Secretary-General covering the period of January to April 2017. Much has transpired since the reporting period ended on 15 April, and I will share the main facts and some observations about the more recent developments.

The last quarter witnessed fluctuating tensions and fragility; however, the situation remains generally stable. Escalation has been avoided in several instances as a result of external diplomatic interventions, but the necessary level of trust in Pristina and Belgrade has been further eroded by a number of irresponsible and inflammatory statements. Both sides have repeatedly accused one another of provocation whereas the process of normalization of relations requires cooperation.

The decision to call an early parliamentary election in Kosovo in June following the collapse of the governing alliance, and the lines painstakingly forged in 2014 were a significant development. The outcome of the election may draw a different future for Kosovo. The next Government, regardless of its composition, will nonetheless continue to face numerous pressing challenges. Elections provide opportunities for the renewal of political will and direction, as well as for greater diversity in leadership and representation — for example, greater engagement with youth.

I must express my shock, shared by many in Kosovo, at the attack this past weekend on Arbana Xharra, a prominent media figure who recently entered electoral politics. Regardless of the motives of the perpetrators, I cannot sufficiently stress the importance of a swift and full investigation, this terrible incident having taken place at the outset of the political campaign.

It is my responsibility to inform the Council of progress made and the challenges that remain, identifying dangers and dissecting the complexities of the current situation. It is important to note that the Mitrovica wall dispute was resolved peacefully through negotiations, and that the initial determination to form a Kosovo army via legislative amendments has calmed. However, the relations between Pristina and Belgrade are still not at ease. The frequent electoral cycles are part of a continuum of distraction that is not helping to advance the European Union-led dialogue or the implementation of its central agreements, such as the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. In practical terms, the dialogue has been at a standstill for some months now; its resumption is of the greatest importance.

Besides the limited progress seen in the dialogue process, public communications during this reporting period unfortunately slid back into intolerant and ethno-nationalist sloganeering. This tendency should be followed closely and is a matter of deep concern. Instead of elaborating on this trend, I would like to review what we have heard from different leaders during this period.

In relation to Serbia's request for the extradition from France of Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the political party Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, prior to the decision of the French authorities, the Kosovo

Assembly, on 9 March, adopted a resolution calling for suspension of the European Union-facilitated dialogue with Belgrade until Mr. Haradinaj had been released. It is hoped that the resolution will now be rescinded.

In a television interview in early April, prominent Assembly Member Daut Haradinaj, the brother of Ramush Haradinaj, warned of an "ethnically clean Kosovo" if judicial authorities in France were to rule in favour of Serbia's extradition request for his brother. Upon his return to Kosovo, on 27 April, Ramush Haradinaj himself referred to Serbia's extradition request as "a call to war", referred to the "enemy, Serbia" and threatened "we will do to them far worse than we did back then," referring to the highest point of the war, in 1999. Outgoing Serbian President Nikolić compared Haradinaj to a "rabid dog that has tasted human flesh".

Such statements directly and negatively affect the atmosphere among the communities in Kosovo. Are these responsible statements? Such incitements to hatred fall outside the realm of civil political discourse. They throw us into a situation where, as has been said, reason would be consumed in the flames of irresponsible and unnecessary behaviour.

Another issue that has received a great deal of attention is the question of regional and subregional unions, should the enlargement of the European Union stall. Again, I will report to the Council on what we have heard from different leaders during the reporting period.

In a mid-April interview the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, stated,

> "[e]veryone would like to unite in the big union. But if there is no hope, no perspective, no space, then, of course, smaller unions may happen".

Other politicians seized the moment to shape this statement into an expression of nationalist intent. President Hashim Thaçi remarked,

"[if] the EU continues with the delay and the unclear approach", then "all Albanians in the region will live in one unified State in order to proceed with integration into the European family". The President of Serbia's National Council of Albanians went further, saying, "now is a key moment for Albania and Kosovo to show Serbia that this is a part of Albania that must not be touched", referring to mixed-ethnicity municipalities in southern Serbia.

In reaction, Serbian Cabinet Minister Aleksandar Vulin stated that Greater Albania "can only be accomplished by a great Balkan war". He further stated that

> "Albanians must be aware that they will have to fight their own wars and that they will pay for the wars Haradinaj is trying to cause with the heads of their own children".

Whatever the real intent behind such remarks, some issues have moved from a more academic or semi-academic debate to the political level. Such suggestions can also fuel fears and tensions and lead to something much worse. One must ask, what place does such rhetoric have in 2017? What should any person, be they Albanian or Serb, make of such statements? Such language and such thinking produces real effects on the ground.

There were a notable cluster of security incidents centred on the city of Mitrovica, including physical assaults, including some in which weapons were used. Under the important agreements brokered by the European Union, a long-anticipated and positive development is the expected opening of the city's main bridge to vehicular traffic. Yet in the current climate, expectations are tinged with anxiety and fear, rather than optimism.

Constructive engagement continues to be possible, and we witness this fact on the ground every day. I have continued meeting municipal and community leaders throughout all parts of Kosovo. In this past quarter, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with municipal mayors in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pristina, north Mitrovica and south Mitrovica. I witnessed real commitment to promoting cooperation between the communities and to resolving real issues in the daily lives and needs of people. I have been exposed not to political rhetoric, but rather to serious work aimed at building a tolerant and inclusive society.

Particularly encouraging is the establishment, by the associations of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb families of missing persons of a shared resource centre. Supported by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the centre brings the families of missing persons together to encourage dialogue and common efforts. The missing persons issue is an open wound that inhibits societal reconciliation, but I have been struck by the spirit of unity at the centre, which is calling for better

performance by politicians and public institutions in both Belgrade and in Pristina in order to bring answers to those who have already suffered too long without such answers.

On 15 March, UNMIK hosted a Global Open Day on Women and Peace and Security, which convened more than 100 dignitaries, journalists and political and civil society leaders to foment a debate about the role of women in societal reconciliation. The event's keynote address was delivered by former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga. We were highly impressed by the diversity of the participants and the constructive manner in which they were willing and able to discuss difficult issues. We will continue to support women who take courageous stands to shape a better future for Kosovo.

Furthermore, UNMIK has worked to implement resolution 2250 (2015), focusing on youth. On 11 May, UNMIK hosted the second in a series on meetings entitled "Stories from the other side", which brings together young people from Kosovo's diverse communities. Identifying their shared perspective, they come up with new ideas for tackling current social problems in Kosovo.

I wish to make special mention of the efforts of the EU Special Representative in Kosovo aimed at reinvigorating the Implementation and Monitoring Council for the protection of cultural heritage, which reconvened during this reporting period after a long hiatus. This mechanism is crucial for implementation of the Law on the Special Protective Zones and is a platform for discussion of the full range of issues in the area of protecting cultural heritage. Included among those is the continuing obstruction by the Deçan/Dečani authorities of the Kosovo Constitutional Court's ruling on property belonging to the Visoki Dečani Orthodox Monastery. The central authorities have yet to cancel the procedure for privatizing the formerly disputed land, despite the clear legal decision by Kosovo's highest court.

Improving the situation in Kosovo and the region requires leadership that transcends ethno-national divisions, rather than amplify them. Overcoming such destructive challenges is the European spirit to which all regional actors aspire. I hope the members of the Council can continue to use their considerable influence to encourage democratic institutions to serve the real needs of the people and to encourage leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to proceed with visionary dialogue, in their own and their people's true common interest.

Our Mission continues to work to support those ends with all our means and in full partnership and cooperation with local and international partners. The Council's authority remains absolutely indispensable for ensuring accountability and for recognizing the leaders who understand that their political success is measured through the well-being of the people.

I take this opportunity once again to thank all members of the Council for their ongoing support of our Mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Ms. Kuburović (Serbia): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his engagement in the implementation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) mandate under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and the members of the Council for their attention to this issue. I wish to underline the importance of continued Council meetings on this topic every three months — in the context of contributing to the creation of conditions for the unimpeded implementation of the UNMIK mandate and supporting the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina with the facilitation of the European Union (EU).

Serbia attaches particular importance to the work of UNMIK and believes that the Mission requires adequate personnel and an increase in staff and financing if it is to meet all the needs related to the implementation of its mandate. At the same time, we are aware that the Mission is operating in an unfriendly environment, often characterized by the animosity of the Albanian community. It is in those terms that we understand UNMIK's endeavours to portray the situation on the ground in more moderate tones, refraining from assessments that would inevitably have to be very critical of Pristina, which in turn could lead to erroneous and simplified conclusions.

Despite numerous challenges, Serbia continues to participate in the dialogue in a constructive, responsible and dedicated way, with the aim of addressing outstanding issues within a status-neutral framework, contributing to the stabilization of the situation and

creating the ideal conditions to facilitate EU membership for the Western Balkans. Pristina's treatment of the dialogue and the process of normalization of relations as a means of blackmailing Serbian and its European partners is unacceptable. Such an attitude culminated at the beginning of March, when its Assembly adopted a resolution on suspending the dialogue tying it, de facto, to the destiny of one person, who has been charged with committing the most heinous crimes. That was followed by the overt threats of regional Albanian political leaders of redrawing borders and creating the so-called "greater Albania", unless their ambitions regarding European integration are met expeditiously.

Despite the fact that the agreement on the establishment of an association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo constitutes the most important part of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations and is the key question for the survival of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, no significant progress was made on that matter during the reporting period. The problem will not be resolved by sporadic public criticisms of Pristina made in the West. It is necessary to hear the unified voice of our European partners and the voices of the members of the Security Council demanding that Pristina expeditiously fulfil its commitments association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. Similarly, the Republic of Serbia stresses the importance of holding quarterly Council meetings to send a message to both sides, especially Pristina, that agreements are not and cannot be dead letters. Empty words no longer suffice; specific acts must follow.

Serbia is genuinely committed to the preservation of peace. Its primary interest is to save the lives and protect the property of all residents of the province, and to enable the sustainable return of internally displaced persons. Regrettably, we must note that the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija is quite ill-suited in that regard — a fact that is also borne out by Secretary-General reports. The absence of a proper systematic response by the Pristina institutions to the multiple problems facing non-Albanian communities, as well as an intensive anti-Serbian campaign, has contributed to continuing ethnically motivated attacks against the Serbs. A case in point is the recent horrifying threat by Daut Haradinaj, a member of the Assembly of Kosovo from the opposition party Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, that not a single living Serb will remain in Kosovo and Metohija if the results of the proceedings against his brother, Ramush Haradinaj, are contrary to the wishes of the Albanians. Mr. Tanin's reaction to that statement was commendable. Moreover, the justice system in Kosovo and Metohija must not remain silent in the face of hate speech and new threats regarding the ethnic cleansing of the remaining Serbs.

There can be no genuine reconciliation without the prosecution of all crimes, without exception, nor if there is unwillingness to hold perpetrators within one's own ranks accountable. The fact that not a single killer of any of about 1,000 Serbs killed since the end of the conflict has been convicted with a legally enforceable sentence speaks for itself. That cannot be the path to genuine reconciliation; it leads only to the simulacrum of reconciliation, as directed by the promoters of the Kosovo project.

Impunity for crimes must not be allowed or tolerated. The entire United Nations membership is being challenged; it must show that law and justice are above politics and that all victims are equal. It is exactly for that reason that we consider the decision of the French court of Colmar to refuse to extradite Ramush Haradinaj — a man suspected of the most serious war crimes — shameful, illegal and scandalous. The court did not present any fact to prove that the requirements of the 1957 European Convention on Extradition, ratified both by France and Serbia, have not been fulfilled. The court decision is a violation of the universal principles of international law on preventing impunity for war crimes, while its contention that the extradition of Ramush Haradinaj to Serbia would have very serious consequences for him is unacceptable and unfounded.

Outrageous crimes and atrocities committed against Serbian civilians, as well as against unloyal Albanians, committed by the terrorist organization Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), one of whose leaders was Ramush Haradinaj, are frightening, to say the least. The testimony of brutal and repeated rapes, torture, beating and ruthless killings by KLA members are shocking. All those who believe that the decision of the French court is a victory for the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija are wrong. It is not they who are the victors, but crime, and it is not our defeat, but the defeat of law and justice. For the sake of the victims, it is our moral obligation to continue our fight for justice and truth. We shall not give up; our victims are no less valuable.

Yet the message of that politically motivated decision and of those who welcomed the criminal Ramush Haradinaj to Pristina with fireworks is that the killing of Serbs is not and should not be punishable. Albanian political leaders in Pristina must finally understand that punishing war criminals is part of the process of normalizing relations, and that backing a man who is suspected of crimes against the Serbs and the Roma, as well as against his own compatriots, only serves to widen the inter-ethnic gap in Kosovo and Metohija and to undermine the rule of law and democracy for residents of the province.

As if the crimes committed in 1998 and 1999 had not sufficed, Ramush Haradinaj continues to make new threats — to seize the territory of Serbia and rewrite its constitution by force. Moreover, he promises that if the United States will not help, then the Albanians will finish the job themselves. I would recall that everything in Kosovo and Metohija began with the lies told by people such as William Walker; today he does not even bother to conceal his affinity for greater Albania ambitions and projects. He is also known to oppose the Specialist Chambers, established to try the crimes committed by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.

In this context, I wish to recall that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreed, under the agreement of 16 October 1998, that 2,000 members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission would be deployed on part of its territory, Kosovo and Metohija. The validity of the agreement was confirmed by resolution 1203 (1998), of 24 October 1998, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fulfilled all its obligations under the resolution and the agreement. However, William Walker, who headed the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and was, as an official of the organization, obliged to act objectively and impartially, abused his mandate and the OSCE mission in order to promote the goals that have been unveiled lately and consisted of the creation of an independent Kosovo and greater Albania.

The Verification Mission headed by William Walker never acted in its full capacity, and all its verifiers were withdrawn on the basis of his decision of 20 March 1999, immediately before the aggression on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The failure to realize the OSCE Mission under the agreement of 16 October 1998, the pressure put on Helena Ranta to tailor her forensic findings to William Walker's wishes and the dispatch of a false report on the alleged massacre of civilians committed in the village of Račak speak volumes, especially in the context of the recent statements by William Walker regarding the project of creating a greater Albania. They indicate in clear terms that he acted in a way that was abusive of the OSCE mandate and, by the same token, violated resolution 1203 (1998).

In this context, the role played by William Walker can be characterized only as an abuse of his position in a respectable international organization such as the OSCE to create the political conditions for the adoption of a decision on the aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is also corroborated by the recent statement of Victoria Nuland to the effect that the United States has invested in the independence of Kosovo for 20 years.

The actions of William Walker and the use of armed force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are nothing other than a flagrant violation of the principles on which the United Nations is based, in particular the principle on refraining from the threat of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State, and a violation of the imperative clause of Article 53 of the United Nations Charter to the effect that no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies, which includes the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, without the authorization of the Security Council.

The decision to use force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was taken and carried out without the authorization of the Security Council by those same countries that continue to this day to advocate recognition of the independence of Kosovo. The sovereign rights of Serbia are thus being violated, and the authority of the Council in the performance of its main duty of the maintenance of peace and security is being undermined.

The illegal decision on the aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resulted primarily from the report of William Walker, although there was neither a humanitarian disaster nor any persecution of Kosovo and Metohija Albanians in the province in 1998-1999. For instance, at the time when William Walker was heading the Verification Mission, a communication from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 12 January 1999 to a court in Trier stated that the operations of the Yugoslav and Serbian security

forces were not directed against Kosovo Albanians as an ethnic group but against the militant opponents and their alleged followers.

The position on the alleged humanitarian intervention in Kosovo and Metohija was not that of the Security Council or any other credible body. The facts underlying the assessment that a military intervention was required at the time were contradictory and tailored to suit the needs of NATO, with the goal of launching an armed aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Invoking a humanitarian intervention as the basis for the use of armed force is in sharp contrast with the practice of the International Court of Justice — for example, the case of Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua — and other documents developed under United Nations auspices. That the so-called humanitarian intervention has never become part of international law was made clear by, inter alia, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), which confirmed in its paragraph 79 that

> "the relevant provisions of the [United Nations] Charter are sufficient to address the full range of threats to international peace and security",

and further reaffirmed

> "the authority of the Security Council to mandate coercive action to maintain and restore international peace and security",

emphasizing

> "the importance of acting in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter".

The aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resulted in large-scale destruction and loss of life and the expulsion of a huge number of Serbs and other non-Albanians from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. The facts provide ample evidence today that the action against Serbia was planned and that it was calculated and not aimed at satisfying international justice.

Resolution 1244 (1999) does not constitute, nor can it constitute, a post factum approval of the use of armed force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, nor can it change the legal qualification of the NATO intervention as an aggression. That resolution, as stated by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo (see A/64/881), forms part of international law, as does UNMIK regulation No. 2009/1, which defines Kosovo and Metohija as a territory within the Republic of Serbia under international administration.

It is evident that the human rights of non-Albanians continue to be systematically threatened all across Kosovo and Metohija. Numerous incidents provide ample evidence of the fact that security in Kosovo and Metohija remains unstable and subject to an escalation of violence. As a rule, returnees in ethnically mixed communities are the most vulnerable. This issue should be accorded greater attention in the reports of the Secretary-General. On average, 10 to 15 ethnically motivated attacks are recorded every month, followed by an ever-present intimidation campaign against Serbs. None of the perpetrators has yet been punished. Let me mention only the protest by a group of Albanians in the village of Ljubožda, near Istok, to which 13 Serbian families returned recently, as proof that Kosovo and Metohija still has a long way to go before it becomes a multi-ethnic society in which all its residents are treated equally. The lack of proper institutional response represents tacit approval of, and even support for, the continuation of such practices.

There can be no harmonious coexistence where the rate of IDP returns, only 1.9 per cent, is lower than in the most traumatized post-conflict areas. Let me remind the Council that there are still more than 200,000 IDPs living in central Serbia. The key obstacles to their return include continuous attacks on Serbian and other non-Albanian returnees, looting, the desecration of cultural and religious heritage, and politically motivated criminal proceedings against IDPs, as well as their inability to exercise the right to property restitution.

In this context, it is necessary that all actors involved in the resolution of the question of IDPs work together to create conditions conducive to unimpeded and long-term sustainable returns, a key element of the UNMIK mandate. In a memorandum issued following his mission to Kosovo and Metohija, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

> "notes with concern the existence in Kosovo of many obstacles to the voluntary return of displaced persons."

He goes on to say that "[a]lthough the Stabilization Association Agreement", signed by the European Union and Pristina in October 2015,

"reaffirms refugees' and displaced persons' right to return and the protection of their human rights, [...] progress in this field has been very modest."

The Commissioner expresses his particular concern

"about the reported negative impact on voluntary returns of acts of hostility or flagrantly ethnically motivated violence"

and the lack of classification by the police of

"ethnically motivated crimes as such and [...] systematic monitoring of the situation in this field".

A special threat to the security of the southern Serbian province recently has been the trend of the continuation of the process of the return of foreign terrorist fighters from Middle East battlefields and the escalation of political and religious extremism.

Serbia is strongly opposed to the establishment of the so-called Kosovo Army, contrary to resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. Efforts to establish the so-called Kosovo Army are but an attempt to create new tensions at an extremely sensitive moment, marked by dangerous statements on redrawing internationally recognized borders and creating a greater Albania, an idea that we had believed belonged to the dark past of this part of the Western Balkans during the Second World War.

Guided by the interests of regional stability, Serbia is firmly committed to the continuation of the dialogue, aimed primarily at resolving the everyday problems of the people living in Kosovo and Metohija without prejudice to the future status of the province and with full respect for resolution 1244 (1999). This resolution continues to be the basis and framework for the solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija with guarantees for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. We consider that the dialogue, with the facilitation of the European Union, is the most appropriate vehicle to build confidence between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, and an important mechanism for supporting the efforts of the European Union to solidify peace and stability and further the process of European integration in our region.

Yet it is hard to push aside the impression that the dialogue is not yielding results at the moment, which could be due to the non-constructive position of Pristina to implement the agreements. For the dialogue to be genuinely meaningful, it must not be abused as a platform for the imposition of the interests of one side, based on unrealistic expectations that normalization should amount to nothing other than the recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence by Serbia. The positive results achieved thus far in areas such as telecommunications and the freedom of movement are eloquent proof that there is no alternative to the dialogue and that it should be continued with more responsibility and a genuine commitment to compromise.

We hope that Pristina will realize that it should and must find mutually acceptable solutions with Belgrade for all outstanding issues, which cannot be based on diktat and fait accompli. In the quest for such solutions, it is necessary to avoid unilateral acts — which are, in many ways, harmful — such as attempts to admit Pristina to various international organizations and the unlawful decisions, which are null and void for the Republic of Serbia, such as that of 1 March to appropriate the property of the Republic of Serbia. Such decisions needlessly pollute the atmosphere of the dialogue. To give the dialogue a chance, it will certainly be necessary that the facilitator demonstrate stronger leadership, primarily in the area of the implementation of reached agreements.

I will conclude my statement with a call to those countries that have not recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo to remain consistent in their principled respect of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, I call on those countries that have recognized Kosovo to reconsider their decision and contribute accordingly to efforts to finding a mutually acceptable solution to this question, proceeding from the unacceptability of unilateralism as a way of solving any issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: I am honoured to be here today, and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity given to me by the members of the Security Council, whose time is very valuable. I know that, as we speak, the world has many pressing challenges and problems to address.

It was in 1993 that members of the Council in this Chamber spoke about Kosovo for the first time. At that time, when based solely on our ethnicity we were exposed to apartheid, imprisoned for our political beliefs and expelled from our schools and rightful jobs, the Security Council members in this chamber

spoke up. Later in 1998 and 1999, as we were living the nightmare of brutality, the Security Council adopted seven resolutions calling for peace and the end of ethnic cleansing. For that we will be forever grateful. All members spoke on our behalf. They were with us when approximately 1 million Kosovars — half of our population — were deported, while assisting us in the refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia. And they were with us when we returned home. Although we found everything in ashes, we rebuilt our homes and lives with their help and support. They were there for us during the most difficult days, but now it is simply unnecessary, counterproductive and, frankly, cynical to come here every three months, repeat the same old stories just for purely political reasons and a power play.

Resolution 1244 (1999), adopted 18 years ago, expired a long time ago. First of all, it refers to a union that no longer exists. I am sure that the members of the Council have heard about Montenegro's recent accession to NATO. According to the resolution, however, Montenegro is part of a union called Serbia and Montenegro. Secondly, it was precisely in this Chamber that on 24 October 2005 the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2005/51) calling for the beginning of a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.

It was precisely the Secretary General's Special Envoy, the wise President Ahtisaari, who, after a very intensive and extensive process of negotiations, proposed independence for Kosovo as a final solution. It was precisely the International Court of Justice that, at Serbia's request for review, specifically and unambiguously stated that Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence and that its independence did not violate the international law. I invite everyone to come to Kosovo and see the reality, because — trust me — the discussions in this Chamber do not correspond to it.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: just because Serbia does not recognize us as a State does not mean that we are not within our rights to be an independent State and people. Just because we are not yet a State Member of the United Nations — because of purely geopolitical power plays beyond our control — does not make us any less of a State. And, yes, we are not a perfect State. We face many challenges. We have much that remains to be done. But we all know that the reason that we came and sat here today — and why we do so every three months — is not because we are not perfect.

Let us take the example of minority rights. If the situation of minorities in any given country were to be the criterion for meeting here every three months, believe me when I say that Kosovo would be far down on the list, not because the situation concerning the integration of minorities is perfect but because we have gone to great lengths to accommodate their needs. Serbs in Kosovo are the most privileged minority in Europe. Does anyone know where the most discriminated community in Europe lives? The answer is in Serbia — Presheve, Medvegje and Bujanoc, where every day the Albanian community is faced by all forms of harsh discrimination. I am not talking only about high levels of intolerance or hidden discrimination, which has always existed, but the visible and constant discrimination of ethnic Albanians, especially in the areas of the economy and education, including their underrepresentation at the local and central levels of employment in the public sector and many other restrictions that they face on a daily basis.

I know that because I visited them myself. Yet there is no Security Council meeting or discussion concerning their rights. The bottom line is that Serbia uses this platform and somehow insists on an asymmetrical representation. It insists that we are somehow not equal, that somehow they are superior. Let me to say it again, loud and clear. We are independent, equal and confident, and we are not inferior. There is something inherently racist in that attitude. Serbia has always tried to portray us as an unworthy class of people with no culture, a second class. Try saying that to Majlinda Kelmendi, our Olympic gold medallist; or Petrit Halilaj, who was honoured last week at the Venice Biennale; or Mergim Cahani, who three years ago had an idea and today is running the fastest-growing information and technology company in the region; or the brand-new graduates I met the other day at the American University in Pristina, who were full of hopes, dreams and curiosity, no different from their peers in Europe and America.

What I am trying to say is that although Kosovo has many challenges, this Chamber is not where we should address them. Furthermore, spending the Security Council's precious resources on a Mission that no longer serves a purpose is an injustice to all the people who do need its help. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has no

role in Kosovo, which is why we were surprised to see that its budget and staff for next year are increasing. The Council may choose to keep an expensive Mission in Kosovo, but there is no role for it to play in its current form.

The most recent Security Council debate on peacekeeping missions (see S/PV.7918), initiated by the United States delegation in the presence of the Secretary-General and supported by the members of the Council, highlighted conclusions that the Council's approach to peacekeeping missions should change, which is precisely what we have been calling for a long time now. Without undermining the vital importance that peacekeeping missions have for security in general, I should point out that the mandates of some missions — UNMIK being a good example — were drafted years, sometimes even decades, ago. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassadors Haley and Delattre for saying that this was the right time to close the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

The second thing I want to talk about is the dialogue with Serbia. While we will remain committed to it, we are tired of double standards, double games and ambiguity. On the one hand Serbia tells us that it is for peace and reconciliation; on the other, every day it misuses the INTERPOL Red Notice system and issues warrants against our leaders and freedom fighters who defended their homes from atrocities, as the Council and the entire world are well aware. That seems to be part of the old pattern of brutality mixed with fake bureaucracy that tormented Kosovars for decades. After beating, humiliating, killing or, in the best cases, expelling them from Kosovo, Serbian police would draw up terrorism charges against them to prevent them from returning home or having a normal life.

By the way, those subject to these kinds of fake bureaucratic tactics and fake allegations were not just Kosovars. Many were leaders from other countries, including a former United States President, a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Prime Ministers of Italy and Germany, as well as Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Defence were included on Red Notices. The most recent episode, involving Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, has thankfully ended, and although it took a few months, he has finally been released by the French authorities. What happened to him says a lot about the state of mind that prevails in Serbia today. Mr. Haradinaj was acquitted not once but twice by the Tribunal in The Hague.

Serbia knows very well that it has lost the battle with Kosovo. Militarily, it was lost in 1999; politically in 2008; juridically in 2009, with the ruling of the International Court of Justice. And it is now clear that Serbia wants to win the moral challenge by trying somehow to artificially create a moral parity between itself and the rest of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. That is simply false. There was one aggressor in the former Yugoslavia, and it was Serbia. There was one military that fought for expansion and committed genocide. The rest of us — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo — were fighting for freedom and our lives. Even today, Serbia refuses to accept historical responsibility for what happened. Even today we heard a representative of Serbia's Government deny a massacre that happened before the eyes of the world. The point I am trying to make is that for reconciliation to happen, Serbia has to accept Kosovo as an equal and as a State. And it also has to accept its historical responsibility. Would the reconciliation between France and Germany have ever happened if Germany had denied its responsibility for the Second World War?

Serbia has failed to deal with its own past. It has failed to deal with the real — not fictional, but real and well-documented — crimes that were committed in Kosovo during the war. The Centre for Human Rights in Serbia published a horrifying report with facts and figures that illustrate the unprecedented measures that Serbia undertook to hide traces of its war crimes, going as far as to erect buildings on top of mass graves. Imagine the feelings of the thousand families in Kosovo that are demanding answers and a proper burial. Instead of finding the strength to deal with its own past, instead of seeking catharsis, Serbia has chosen the path of denial. The number of Serbians charged with or convicted for crimes committed in Kosovo is zero. Rather, they are being promoted to high-level positions, as in the case of General Dikovi, whose responsibility for killing 1,400 civilians is documented.

Regardless, however, we will not allow Serbia to deter us from our own commitments. Between 2009 and 2015 alone, Kosovo institutions issued more than 20 indictments for war crimes. Every life is important and every death should be properly investigated. We will remain committed to peace and dialogue, just as we have always been. And we will work harder and

harder to become a responsible member of the family of the free nations of the world.

We also want to become contributors to regional and global security. In accordance with our laws and Constitution, therefore, we have initiated the establishment of a Kosovo army. We will engage in an intensive and serious effort to convince the local Serbian population to support this project. All other minorities in Kosovo support it. But we will not allow anyone to hold us hostage, nor will we give veto power to anyone in that regard. We will push for constitutional changes, but if it becomes obvious that Serbia is interfering and not allowing local Serbian members of Parliament to decide on their own, then we will move ahead with legislative changes.

We are not buying MIGs, so there is no room for panic. This is a small defensive force, which will complete our State security infrastructure, in accordance with the security sector review that we conducted together with NATO.

As Council members may have already heard, after the no-confidence motion last week, Kosovo will hold early parliamentary elections in June this year. We have invited international observers to monitor the process. For Kosovo, the credibility of the electoral process is far more important than the outcome. Way too many challenges lie ahead this year, and the new Government will need full credibility and legitimacy to push forward the agenda.

Furthermore, while there are obvious differences between the political parties in Kosovo, just like in any democracy, there is a fundamental agreement and a broad social consensus about the Euro-Atlantic future of Kosovo. There is no Great Kosovo or Great Albania; there are Albanians living in Kosovo, Albanians living in Albania, Albanians living in Macedonia — our common goal and shared objective is to be equal citizens of the European Union.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I extend my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on the report (S/2017/387) of the Secretary-General. Egypt reiterates its full support to Mr. Tanin in the performance of his duties. We also welcome Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku and thank them for their statements.

Egypt stresses its concern with regard to promoting security and stability in the Western Balkans region, which is affected by the situation in Kosovo. We highly value the efforts deployed by the Kosovo authorities recently with a view to achieving that objective and the reforms it has begun to implement. We commend the progress achieved in the economic, security and rule-of law-fields, which were reflected in higher development rates, lower unemployment and a general improvement in the investment environment. We call upon the new Kosovo Government to continue that approach of settling differences through constructive dialogue.

At the same time, we are concerned by the information contained in the report of the obstacles facing the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and the implementation of the agreements achieved between them. Egypt stresses that high-level dialogue between the two sides under the auspices of the European Union remains the most appropriate framework to settle differences peacefully between them. We call upon the two sides to exercise restraint and to refrain from unilateral steps that may exacerbate the situation between them. We therefore urge leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to continue the high-level dialogue with a view to achieving agreed and sustainable solutions that are acceptable by both sides and lay the foundations for peace and stability in the region.

We also express our concern at the surge of ethnic and nationalist tendencies, and also stress the need to avoid instigations that may exacerbate the situation and internal divisions. We welcome the decision by the political powers representing the Kosovo Serbs to end their boycott and resume their participation in the Government and the Assembly. We call upon all parties in Kosovo to also adopt the approach of dialogue, understanding and the establishment of State institutions, and stress the importance of achieving progress in the establishment of local Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which we believe is vital to ensure the institutional protection of the Kosovo Serbs.

Lastly, and in view of the importance we attach to regional peace and security as one of the pillars of our foreign policy, we stress the importance that the

Kosovo Assembly should accept the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro in order to expedite the integration of Kosovo in Europe.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for today's update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations over 18 years to help Kosovo build multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We are pleased that those efforts have largely been accomplished. The situation in Kosovo today is very different from when UNMIK was first created, and also different from 2008, when the Secretariat last restructured it. Given how Kosovo has progressed and has developed over the years, the United States and a growing number of Council members have urged the Secretariat to continue the work of winding down the mission, recognizing that it has fulfilled its mandate.

While UNMIK should go down in history as a model of the value of the United Nations, it increasingly risks being memorialized as an example of a programme lingering beyond its relevance and a bureaucracy not sure of how to deal with closure. Seemingly, without regard to the realities on the ground, UNMIK continues to be overresourced and overstaffed in comparison with its limited responsibilities. Even more puzzling, the Mission is requesting new funding for programming that is largely redundant: $2 million dollars in additional resources, primarily for human rights and rule-of-law programming, despite the leading role of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in that area, and despite a demonstrated ability of the Government of Kosovo to effectively govern and administer those and other functions with complete independence.

In response to those realities, the United States supports considering the phasing out of UNMIK to better reflect the significant progress and development made in Kosovo. Any proposed alternative would need to reflect the reality on the ground and reduce the footprint of the United Nations in Kosovo. The United States repeats its call for the Council to adjust the reporting and briefing period for UNMIK from three to six months, or even longer, which would reduce the burden on the Secretariat and the Council, both of which face competing priorities of far greater urgency.

The United States greatly appreciates and supports the vital role the European Union (EU) as facilitator of the Brussels dialogue, in particular EU High Representative Mogherini's personal leadership of the process. We call on leaders in both Belgrade and Priština to continue taking the needed steps to revitalize the talks and to exercise restraint as provocations arise. We also call on both Serbia and Kosovo to fully implement dialogue agreements without further delay and to work more actively towards the normalization of relations.

In relation to the comments about the events at Račak by the Minister of Justice of Serbia this morning, I would just say that the bodies at Račak are testimony to the atrocities and violence that took place there. The forensic work produced by international observers at the time was clear and unambiguous on that. All the countries in the Balkans must undertake a full, honest accounting of the events that transpired during the break up of Yugoslavia and the conflicts of the 1990s and refrain from that type of historical revisionism that sows distrust and fear. Rather then attempting to relitigate the past with falsehoods, leaders need to focus on the hard work necessary to promote dialogue and reconciliation and pursuing more stable, prosperous and secure Balkan region on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration. We call on all leaders in the region to avoid careless inflammatory rhetoric that incites backlash and instead, focus on addressing the fundamental political and economic reforms necessary to advance their further integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. The borders of the Balkan countries are defined and firm.

The United States reaffirms its support for Kosovo's efforts to develop into a prosperous and peaceful multi-ethnic democracy. We continue to strongly support the full international recognition of Kosovo and Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations. We encourage States Members of the United Nations that have not yet done so to join the more than 110 United Nations Members that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), on his excellent briefing and to assure him once again of the full support of the Senegalese delegation as he carries out his duties

Secondly, I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia,

and to Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States.

My delegation remains concerned about the continuing tensions that somewhat hamper the substantial progress noted since the end of the conflict. In that regard, and with a view to restarting the process of building and preserving lasting stability that extends beyond Kosovo to all entire region of the Balkans, first, we strongly encourage Kosovar political actors to work towards maintaining a peaceful political climate on which the quality of the dialogue with Belgrade greatly depends; and secondly, we encourage Serbian authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to participating in a constructive and peaceful dialogue with Priština.

That said, Senegal welcomes the progress made thus far by both parties in the dialogue conducted under the auspices of the European Union and encourages countries and partners with influence to continue to use that influence to revive and support the talks. In order to build on the results achieved in that context, we believe that it is essential that the agreements reached thus far be implemented and that political leaders on both sides be fully committed to pursuing, in a constructive spirit, the dialogue as it is the only viable way to normalize relations.

Recent developments outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387), including the proposal by the President of Kosovo to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force, through legislation and not via referendum, have sparked controversy. Fortunately, that draft law was withdrawn on 7 March, with a statement from President Thaçi promising that no unilateral action would be taken on that issue and that the transformation process would be transparent and inclusive and carried out in cooperation with the country's international partners.

On another note, the adoption by the Assembly of Kosovo of the resolution calling for the suspension of dialogue between Belgrade and Priština, which is facilitated by the European Union, in protest at the detention of Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, became another source of tension, which we hope has abated now that he has been released. Senegal also hopes that fears arising from the decision of the Government of Kosovo to transfer to Kosovo the ownership of all property previously registered to predecessors or administrative, military, social or political organizations, have subsided.

On a positive note, my delegation commends the unhindered participation of Kosovo Serbs in Serbia's presidential election at polling stations throughout Kosovo, as well as the smooth running of the elections, which received support from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force. We also welcome the high-level meetings organized by Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on 24 January and 6 February in Brussels. The Presidents and Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo participated in the meetings. They have all committed to resuming dialogue at the highest level, under the auspices of the European Union, and to refraining from making provocative or belligerent statements.

We share the view of the Secretary-General that the issue of missing persons, which should remain a top priority, requires that leaders on both sides have a firm and genuine political will in order to provide families with the answers they have been awaiting for so long.

On another note, my delegation would like to commend the efforts of the Kosovo Security Force in the fight against violent extremism in Kosovo. In addition, the activities carried out under the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, whose mandate was extended until 14 June 2018, appear to be advantageous in that they help to build on the achievements made in the areas of defence and the promotion of the rule of law, human rights and the fight against terrorism and organized crime. In addition, we welcome the activities of UNMIK in promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and in providing support for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština.

Senegal would like to express its appreciation regarding the important milestones reached in the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština and encourages the strengthening of the dynamics to normalize relations between the two parties, as well as enhanced cooperation, which is in the interest of their people and fosters peace in the subregion.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking our friend Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing today and for the work he is doing with the Mission. I would also like

to thank Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Council today.

Sweden has long stood with the people of Kosovo in their efforts to leave behind the legacy of war and to build a peaceful and prosperous society. Sweden's Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström, visited Kosovo only two weeks ago to reiterate our firm support of Kosovo's European perspective. She also stressed the need for continuing reforms and normalization of Pristina's relationship with Belgrade as part of the process. We stand ready to help and will continue to support Kosovo's reform efforts through our bilateral development cooperation.

Delivering on Kosovo's European perspective and that of the wider western Balkans region remains a top priority of the European Union. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are prerequisites for a stable, peaceful and prosperous western Balkans. We are therefore concerned about the hardened rhetoric in the region in recent months, as exemplified by the Special Representative today. We call on both sides to redouble their efforts for peace by refraining from rhetoric or actions that risk undermining trust and instead working actively to build confidence and mutual understanding across the region.

It is clear that the future of both Serbia and Kosovo lies within the European Union. For that reason too, normalization of relations is essential. The European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue provides an important framework for finding pragmatic and mutually acceptable solutions to the concerns of both sides. It is an irreversible process that requires a firm commitment.

We expect Pristina and Belgrade to engage constructively in the dialogue and to implement their respective parts of the agreement. That includes, most notably, the dismantling of parallel structures in Serb-majority areas and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. In addition, it is essential that the status issue not hinder Kosovo's European perspective or membership in international organizations.

To achieve the aspirations of the Kosovar people, national leaders must find ways to work together so as not to undermine efforts to achieve the crucial reforms needed to benefit all of the people living in Kosovo. It is regrettable that the current political impasse has hindered concrete and meaningful reform efforts. We hope that the forthcoming elections will lead to strengthening the democratic institutions and continued reforms, especially on rule of law and socioeconomic development.

The United Nations and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have made invaluable contributions to achieving the level of peace and security that we see in Kosovo today. Kosovo will continue to need the support of the international community. However, the present challenges faced by the country must be dealt with, primarily within the framework of the European Union integration process, including through the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. In light of that, we would be interested to receive the views of the Special Representative and the Secretary-General on the possibility of further downsizing UNMIK's structure, size and tasks, as well as on adjusting the reporting and briefing period from three to six months.

The frameworks are in place to realize the vision of a stable and prosperous Kosovo with a normalized relationship with Serbia. However, to fully realize that vision, a more consistent and sustained effort by both Pristina and Belgrade is needed. Doing so will have positive effects across the Western Balkans region.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister of Justice of Serbia, Ms. Nela Kuburović, and share the serious concerns she has expressed with regard to the state of affairs in Kosovo. We are also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and his team for their work, and we thank Mr. Tanin for his objective briefing on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It shows that there ongoing serious, profound problems in the province that require immediate solution, as well as outside monitoring.

Indeed, the scope of ongoing challenges in the province is not decreasing but assuming new forms. As a result, the goal of creating a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo is further away than ever. The problem lies in the obvious lack of desire on the part of the Kosovo authorities to fulfil the obligations undertaken within the framework of the dialogue with Belgrade. This is taking place against the background of the blatant condoning of the situation by outside actors.

The Brussels mediation process is biased in allowing the Kosovo-Albanians to behave in such a manner. As a result, the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina is deteriorating and trust is losing ground. The dialogue has faced an impasse for many months. There has been no major breakthrough on the main track of the negotiations — the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities — despite the fact that an agreement was drafted more than four years ago.

We consider it unacceptable and destructive to attempt to impose a self-governing system on the Serbs that would reduce their own powers to an absolute minimum. It is obvious that the genuine goal of such dead-end initiatives is to blame the Serbs for the dialogue's impasse, whereas in fact the situation is exactly the reverse. The lack of pressure from Brussels means that Kosovo's political leaders feel that they can do anything. They no longer refrain from using the language of open provocation. Very recently, Mr. Thaçi threatened to resign from the post of the so-called President if his initiative to transform the Kosovo Security Force into a fully-fledged army is not implemented. At the same time, we are convinced that the implementation of his proposal would have been a very serious violation of international law, particularly resolution 1244 (1999) and inevitably led to further destabilization in the region and even greater conflict potential.

Of course exerting relevant pressure on Pristina must continue. At the same time, the Kosovo Assembly has adopted a resolution to suspend the dialogue until such a time when France releases someone who is suspected of very serious crimes, namely, the Kosovo Liberation Army fighter Ramush Haradinaj. Moreover, his brother, who is a representative in the Assembly, has threatened ethnic cleansing and issued ultimatums. On 27 April, a French court made an illegitimate and politicized decision to release Mr. Haradinaj, who was apprehended in January by INTERPOL at the request of Serbia. That demonstrates the double standards used in the case of the parties to the Yugoslavian conflict. Once again, we underscore that those who are guilty of carrying out war crimes, regardless of their actual status or position, must be punished.

We are also not surprised by the fact that the investigation of the crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army has been postponed. Allow me to recall that Mr. Marty briefed the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the crimes he had investigated, including the trafficking of human organs, more than six years ago. We hope in the very near future to see the initial results of the Specialist Chambers in The Hague and that that body will lack the flaws of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It is important to ensure that such actions be as transparent as possible.

The European Union, through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which plays a key role in organizing the workings of the Specialist Chambers, must ensure an unbiased and professional approach, which the ICTY was lacking at the time. Mr. Haradinaj was acquitted twice. Moreover, dozens of witnesses in his case were threatened and attacked. This problem becomes all the more evident against the background of the ongoing deterioration we have observed in the region due to provocations made in the name of greater Albania, which is a threat to the security and territorial integrity of a number of States.

Let us try to understand the regional scope of this issue. In Kosovo, Mr. Thaçi stated in an ultimatum that all Albanians will live in the same State unless the European Union fulfils his expectations for integration. A similar sentiment has being expressed by the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Rama. In Macedonia, Albanians are gathering around the infamous Tirana platform, and similar signals are being conveyed by Albanian leaders living in the south of Serbia.

Against this background, let me be candid. We are aware that the former head of the Kosovo Verification Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Walker, distinguished himself by speaking in favour of the project of bringing together the Albanians in Albania, Kosovo and the diaspora and calling upon Albanians to take the final step towards this goal. We call on the European Union and Western capitals to undertake measures as soon as possible to stop these provocative statements, which must be replaced by expressions of a desire to live as good neighbours with mutual respect.

Another example of the weakness of the provincial governmental institutions include the political crisis in Kosovo, whose outcome we can easily predict. Moreover, the freedom of movement agreed by Belgrade and Pristina was undermined by the actions of Kosovo law-enforcement bodies in preventing supporters of Mr. Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party from attending

an electoral rally in the municipality of Leposavić, thereby violating principles that seemed inviolable in Europe, such as the freedom of speech, movement, peaceful assembly and participation in elections. Similarly, there was an incident on 9 May when the head of the Serbian Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Djurić, was barred without explanation from going to a Victory Day meeting in Gračanica.

Pristina's acts aimed at appropriating Serbian State property are unacceptable. Equally unacceptable is the Kosovo Government's decision to transfer all community-owned enterprises to State ownership.

We continue to witness ongoing physical attacks on Serbs. We see their property burned down. We see refugees and internally displaced people thwarted in their attempts to return home, not to mention the desecration of property belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, in particular the land of the Visoki Dečani Orthodox Monastery, despite the fact that its rights had been upheld by the Constitutional Court in Kosovo. The cathedral church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina is in a deplorable state. The Serbian Orthodox Church has been unable to gain access to its religious objects there, which is necessary for their restoration after attacks by vandals.

The need to combat the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Kosovo is increasingly pressing. We are concerned by the fact that the province is being used to recruit foreign terrorist fighters who fight alongside extremists in the Middle East and to prepare terrorist acts elsewhere in the world. Under these circumstances, we think it untimely and counterproductive to plan to reduce the UNMIK staff and the budget parameters. The situation in the province means that decisions such as these are inappropriate, especially in the absence of real dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Therefore, we need to set aside any request to downsize the Mission or even to close it all together.

Instead, we need to undertake constructive work and interaction with that important United Nations operation. I would like to remind the Council that UNMIK is working despite having minimal resources at its disposal. Even so, it is playing a key role in Kosovo affairs and remains an irreplaceable international monitoring tool designed to help normalize the situation in Kosovo, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), which remains fully valid.

In the light of the foregoing, we see no reason to review the practice of having quarterly Security Council briefings on the situation in Kosovo, which, as we have seen during the discussions today, continues to require very close international attention and monitoring.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. China welcomes the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of Serbia, and thanks her for her statement. I have also listened attentively to the statement of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands the country's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo and appreciates its positive efforts to achieve a political settlement of the question of Kosovo. At present, the security situation on the ground remains relatively stable, although some underlying complex issues remain unresolved. China welcomes the holding of another high-level meeting between Belgrade and Pristina. We hope that the parties will remain committed to the general direction of a political settlement, work in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust, and implement all agreements already reached as soon as possible.

Resolution 1244 (1999) provides the important legal basis for resolving the question of Kosovo. All sides should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, work under the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions and find a solution acceptable to all through dialogue and negotiation.

National reconciliation is in the common interest of all sides. We hope that parties will always put the welfare of people first, take concrete measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities in Kosovo, and safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans. The Security Council should keep its attention focused on the question of Kosovo, remain committed to promoting its proper settlement and send a clear signal to the public.

China appreciates the work carried out by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin. We support UNMIK as it continues to discharge its duties in accordance with its mandate and cooperate constructively with all sides.

We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration, make steady headway in improving the situation on the ground and play a positive role for the early settlement of the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin for his briefing and Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their detailed statements.

For Italy, the prospect of European integration is a crucial driving force in efforts aimed at reform that the States of the western Balkans are expected to carry out with the goal of making stability in the region a lasting achievement together with the institutional consolidation in and economic and social development of the area. A few days ago, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, spoke very clearly about the European Union commitment to those objectives (see S/PV.7935).

We firmly believe that the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, which is crucial to the stability of the entire region, can be accomplished only through tangible progress in the process of dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). Important and concrete results have been achieved, and we appreciate the commitment reiterated by the parties to the process. At the same time, we share the Secretary-General's hope of seeing more consistent and sustained efforts from both parties to reactivate the talks and deliver more substantial results.

In that respect, with the perspective of the anticipated elections coming up in Kosovo, we call on Pristina to focus on the swift implementation of all measures agreed in the framework of the European Union facilitated dialogue, with special regard to the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Also, it is important for Pristina to continue along the path of reform, from strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption to socioeconomic development. We hope those reforms will be swiftly pursued by the new elected Government, with the constructive cooperation of all parties.

Underscoring the priority of the European track and acknowledging the substantial progress achieved by Kosovo in recent years, we encourage the Security Council to consider a review of the United Nations presence in Kosovo, including a reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that is consistent with overall peacekeeping reform. That, in our view, will obviously have to be done in close coordination with other international organizations in the region, notably, the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

We would like to once again request that the Secretary-General make recommendations in that regard, given that UNMIK is already refocusing its efforts on confidence-building and collaboration among communities, and to draw his attention, and that of the Council, to the opportunity to improve UNMIK's synergy with the European Union and its coordination with other international actors. We equally support the proposal to revise the frequency of the Secretary General's briefings and reports submitted to the Security Council in order to better reflect the current situation on the ground.

I conclude by highlighting the relevance of the regional dimension. As Chair of the Berlin process in 2017, Italy will work with all western Balkan countries to identify priorities to boost regional integration, stability and economic growth. Both Belgrade and Pristina are actively participating in that process. On 24 May, the six Ministers of the western Balkan countries will visit Rome to meet with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in preparation for the summit we will host in Trieste on 12 July. The summit will provide added value to the regional cooperation process and to the European integration path of the western Balkans.

Italy will continue to be proactively engaged in the western Balkans — in Kosovo, with our long-standing contribution to the activities of the United Nations, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, as well as at th bilateral level. The future of the region matters to all of Europe, particularly Italy. For that reason, we strongly condemn the nationalist and divisive rhetoric recently reignited throughout the region. In order to avoid political instability inside countries of the region, and to counter any further deterioration of the relations among the western Balkans, we call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral initiative or declaration that could hinder common efforts to improve cooperation and consolidate stability. We believe that it is time for all western Balkan countries to turn the page and work together in the interest of all of their people.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative Tanin for his substantive and comprehensive briefing. We thank all of the briefers for their updates on recent developments.

My delegation would like to offer some observations. The developments of the past months highlight the need for the increased engagement of both sides so as to facilitate constructive dialogue, as set forth in the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. The parties need to focus on confidence-building measures and political, military, economic, environmental and human dimensions, in compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and under the auspices of the United Nations, with the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other relevant regional organizations in order to maintain comprehensive and durable security and stability in Kosovo.

At the same time, no initiative should cause further tensions and instability. The situation in Kosovo still needs the continued attention of the Council as a matter on its current agenda. There are yet a number of difficult issues, such as the lack of intercommunal trust and cooperation, increased hatred, missing persons and the right of each — the Serbs in Kosovo and the Albanians in Serbia — to use its native language. The full implementation of language laws, with the protection of minority communities, is critical to ensuring equal rights for all and preserving the cultural diversity of Kosovo and Serbia.

Both sides should take measures to implement language laws and show full respect for each other's cultural heritage. The protection of religious and cultural heritage should be a priority policy, so as to build trust and confidence among communities in Kosovo and Serbia. We commend the additional measures and initiatives of civil society to foster dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. All interested parties must boost and encourage steps that promote the liberation of the people of Serbia and Kosovo, and convince the local population in Kosovo to accept their outcome.

It is critical to communicate extensively and accurately, with both parties and communities, the kinds of social and economic benefits gained by the local population in Kosovo. Residents need to know that dialogue is the only means to bring about good governance and the rule of law, and to tackle the issues of unemployment, education, health care, pensions and other entitlements. All of those activities will assist in gaining the much-needed support.

On the topic of human rights, we need to focus on implementing resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and subsequent resolutions for enhancing gender equality and empowerment. Furthermore, social stability is achievable only with the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional and subregional organizations and civil society groups working to achieve sustaining peace and, thus, further peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo. Progress and the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia remains of crucial importance for regional and international security. We call on both sides to exert great political will to overcome differences through genuine political dialogue, so as to ensure peace and security in the region.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): Please allow me to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his informative briefing and continued service. I should also like to thank Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their extensive remarks.

It has been nearly 18 years since resolution 1244 (1999) established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which played an essential role in restoring peace and stability to Kosovo and the region. Kosovo subsequently achieved independence in 2008. The European Union (EU) has supported the rule of law in many ways, including through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The picture in Kosovo today is vastly different from that of1999, and the centrality of UNMIK's role has undeniably diminished.

Japan fully supports peace, stability, democracy and the economic development of Kosovo. Also, we need to be clear about our priorities in the Security Council, in order to make its work more efficient and effective.

The Council today is faced with serious conflicts and crises in the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world. The Council's workload is greater than it has ever been. By contrast, while the risk of violence in Kosovo has not completely diminished, it is far less than in these other regions. The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/387) notes that there were no violent incidents in Kosovo surrounding the recent Serbian presidential election or any major incidents in northern Kosovo over the past three months. We

therefore believe that we are long overdue to modify the briefing cycle that has remained in place since 1999. We believe that a half-year cycle or longer should be more than sufficient.

With this in mind, Japan believes that limited peacekeeping resources must be redirected to address the most acute needs and crises. The time is ripe for the Council to undertake a review of UNMIK in order to assess the functions that UNMIK alone can provide, as well as possible personnel reductions.

None of this is to deny the outstanding issues that Kosovo faces; reconciliation between the Albanian and Serb communities is by far the most important. The Secretary-General's report notes that many Kosovar Serbs remain unable to return. It will be important for the EU-facilitated high-level dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade to continue. For Kosovo to become a truly multicultural society, ongoing efforts are needed to expand reconciliation and tolerance, including via the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities.

Japan also hopes that Kosovo will become an increasingly responsible member of the international community. We thus welcome the entry into force last year of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the EU. At the same time, we noted the adoption of the no-confidence motion against the Cabinet on 10 May and urge leaders to ensure that Kosovo continues its steady progress towards EU membership while avoiding any narrow nationalist appeals.

Finally, I should like to take note of Kosovo's peace and stability, its democratic progress and last year's 4 per cent economic growth. It is my strong belief that Kosovo will become a diverse, multicultural country through community reconciliation, just socioeconomic policies and tireless efforts by each citizen. While the presence of the United Nations in Kosovo should be scaled down in future, our unwavering support for this young nation's continued development and democracy will remain unchanged.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), our colleague Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo, which has highlighted how the use of language could cause real problems and how loose talk, some would say rhetoric, could lead to a dangerous situation.

I also welcome the presence of Minister Nela Kuburović at today's meeting and would like to thank her for her statement. I also thank Ambassador Ms. Vlora Çitaku for her remarks.

At the previous debate (see S/PV.7891), we made our position very clear with respect to the need to ensure that all the issues surrounding Kosovo are resolved in a just and fair manner, without ignoring the interests of any, big or small. We would like to reiterate our support for the peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

We also welcome the ongoing efforts being made by the European Union in facilitating dialogue between the two parties, including the convening of the two high-level meetings by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in the reporting period.

We note the latest political and security developments in relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and we are concerned by the slow progress in the practical implementation of dialogue agreements between the two parties during the reporting period. In this regard, the lack of concrete steps towards the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo as well the delay in completing judicial integration in northern Kosovo, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/387), should be seen as a source of concern.

We also note the controversy in relation to the proposal on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force and the strong reaction that it has created. On the other hand, however, we recognize some of the positive developments as highlighted in the report, including the resumption by members of the Kosovo Serb political grouping of their participation in official activities of the Assembly and Government of Kosovo, the conduct of voting for the Serbian presidential election throughout Kosovo without any incident, and the lessening of tension in northern Kosovo.

Ethiopia also fully supports the work that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been undertaking in the discharge of the mandates bestowed on it within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), particularly its good offices to

defuse tensions and promote consensual solutions to problems on the ground. It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue and human rights, strengthen community reconciliation, and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region.

In concluding, I should like to state that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be ensured when there is the necessary resolve on the part of all parties to address the real challenge they face. In this respect, we encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation in a spirit of understanding and compromise on mutually acceptable ways.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. Let me join others in welcoming Ambassador Çitaku and Minister Kuburović to the Council.

It has been less than three months since the Council met to discuss the situation in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/387) makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period, one that does not warrant the Council's attention so soon after our last meeting.

This period of calm is welcome. A de-escalation in tension between Kosovo and Serbia, whether in this Chamber or in the region, is something that I am sure we would all like to see sustained. We particularly welcome the withdrawal of the proposal to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue to engage with communities in Kosovo and NATO partners on any such moves.

Despite the stability of the reporting period, we are concerned by the slow progress in the European Union-facilitated dialogue. We all know that the future of Kosovo will be determined in Brussels and not in this Chamber in New York. So it is vital that both sides re-engage and live up to their commitment to the dialogue following elections in Serbia and the forthcoming elections in Kosovo in June.

As Kosovo prepares to go to the polls, let me say that we look forward to free and fair elections and to a Government that reflects the will of the people. Once it is formed, there will be plenty to do, including continuing efforts on issues such as the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. In that effort, they will have the fullest support of the United Kingdom.

While it was not captured in the report of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), it is important to recognize in this Chamber the progress that Kosovo has made internationally since we last met. Diplomatic relations have been established with Brunei and Samoa, and Kosovo opened its first embassy in Africa, in Senegal. And in a further sign of ever-increasing international integration, Kosovo became the 181st member of the World Customs Organization, a move that will bring economic benefits for all who call Kosovo home.

This is progress that we rarely hear about in the Council. Instead, every three months, we are transported back nearly 20 years to a time of ethnic division and of fluid lines on maps, but, in truth, those lines have long since been set. These meetings do not reflect Kosovo now but as it was. Let me reiterate, therefore, that it is long past time for the Council to decrease the frequency of these meetings. And just as these meetings must adapt, so too must UNMIK, so that it better reflects the present situation.

We recognize the important work that UNMIK has done during many years for the benefit of Kosovo, and welcome its activism on the women and peace and security agenda during the reporting period. But it is time for the Mission to take a step back. As such, we are disappointed by the move to increase the budget of UNMIK this year, particularly after numerous calls at the past two meetings for a down-scaling of the Mission and especially given that additional funds are earmarked for projects that focus on issues on which the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo is already engaged.

Given the pressures placed on the peacekeeping budget and Kosovo's continued move away from instability and insecurity, the United Kingdom believes that it is long past time for UNMIK to undergo some form of reconfiguration. We look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretariat in due course.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I join others in thanking Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing.

I also express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their respective statements.

Unfortunately, the negative sequence of events that have caused instability and could generate further tensions in Kosovo continued during the reporting period. Ukraine regrets that, despite the concerns expressed by Security Council members during their discussion in February (see S/PV.7891), Kosovo institutions attempted to move ahead on transforming the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force. We consider such an approach to establish facts on the ground as having the potential to lead to heightened tensions in the region. We are worried that an attempted conversion of the Kosovo Security Force into a Kosovo army, coupled with rising ethno-nationalist sentiments, could be an explosive cocktail. That definitely does not contribute to confidence-building both among communities inside Kosovo and between Belgrade and Pristina. We commend the quick reaction by the NATO and the United States to that development and welcome the decision by Kosovo institutions to withdraw that initiative.

We have also witnessed further disturbing developments with regard to property issues, hate speech implying ethnic cleansing, incidents involving travellers from Kosovo, resistance to the process of peaceful returns, as well as the resolution of the Kosovo Assembly calling for the suspension of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. My delegation is frustrated by the reported obstruction of returns, particularly in Istok. During the first visit of the Security Council to Kosovo in 2000, in which Ukraine participated, Istok was presented as a prospective area for Serbs' returns. Seventeen years later, nothing has changed, and those who oppose returns are using same old arguments.

All those developments do not contribute to the spirit of restraint and cooperation needed to achieve the necessary progress on the implementation of the agreed commitments. Against that backdrop, we welcome the efforts of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO and UNMIK to preserving peace and stability in Kosovo. Their actions are vital for diffusing tensions and averting any further deterioration of the situation. We reiterate our call on political leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to actively work to avoid provocation, confrontation, and escalation leading to a conflict. It is important to continue the implementation of their commitments, thereby bringing benefits for all people living in the region and enhancing their European perspective.

Ukraine would like to take this opportunity to welcome the peaceful holding of the Serbian presidential elections in Kosovo. We are glad that, despite some difficulties, according to the report of the Secretary-General,

> "no security incidents were reported in connection with the voting, collection or transportation of votes" (*S/2017/387, para. 12*).

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's observations that

> "the European Union-facilitated dialogue is the best available mechanism for the peaceful resolution of differences, to the benefit of both sides" (*ibid., para. 47*).

We support the European Union's enhanced role in the region, which has proved to be constructive and has contributed to the stabilization and peaceful development of countries in the Western Balkans and Europe in general.

Finally, we support, as we have before, the call of many other delegations to reconsider the regularity of the Council's briefings on Kosovo and to begin focused discussions on UNMIK' reconfiguration.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo.

I also express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Çitaku for their statements.

Bolivia calls for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), including full respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Serbia. We believe that the attempt to establish a Kosovo army runs contrary to that resolution and poses a threat to the progress made between the parties. Accordingly, that type of action or, indeed, any action leading to an escalation of violence, is not conducive to fostering a peaceful solution and must therefore be avoided. We believe that a constructive environment must be established so as to achieve solutions leading to progress and stability. We therefore commend the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, which opens a way to a lasting solution so as to end the conflicts

affecting the region. To that end, parties must refrain from making statements containing bellicose and inflammatory rhetoric.

Bolivia encourages the parties to continue working together, in particular on the agreement concerning the establishment of the association of Serbian municipalities covered in the Brussels dialogue leading to security and human rights of Serbians in Kosovo and Metohija in which they are the majority of the population. We underscore the voluntary return of 90 members non-majority communities, especially the Roma-Ashkali-Egyptian community. Moreover, Bolivia deplores the hindering of the return of internally displaced persons in certain regions in Kosovo. We call on the parties to join efforts to ensuring their safe return to their homes.

With regard to UNMIK, we highlight the work and efforts made in cooperation with the Kosovar authorities to approve legislation strengthening capacity ensuring the protection of cultural and religious heritage, as well as its work in holding an open roundtable discussion on women and peace and security in Kosovo, on the theme "The role of women in reconciliation: building peace and security in Kosovo". We believe that women are key actors in long-term confidence-building and peace in the region.

We call on the parties to refrain from committing acts of aggression running contrary to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We call on the parties to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the dialogue and the duty to negotiate in accordance with the provisions of international law. Such efforts must be made so as to achieve lasting peace that, over the long-term, will benefit the region if the Serbs and Kosovars show the will to resolve their differences with the help of regional organizations.

Bolivia appreciates the efforts made by the European Union and agrees with the statement made in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/387), according to which,

> "[t]he European Union-facilitated dialogue is the best available mechanism for the peaceful resolution of differences, to the benefit of both sides. Progress, for each party, can be achieved only by peaceful means and, regardless of electoral cycles and daily politics ... ". (*S/2017/387, para. 47*)

Finally, Bolivia appreciates the work and efforts made by UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We encourage continued confidence-building efforts, as well as the use of peaceful means and dialogue with a view to promoting peace, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mrs. Audouard (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing, as well as the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo for their statements.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate, once again, and as others before me have done, our wish that the Security Council review how frequently it considers the situation in Kosovo. With the Council facing an ever-increasing workload, there is no longer any justification for maintaining quarterly briefings on the Kosovo issue, which is not comparable to that of crises for which the Council's robust engagement is essential.

We believe that the positive developments in Kosovo in recent years in terms of institution-building also justify efforts to refocus the actions of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as well as their coordination with other international actors in Kosovo. We once again call on the Secretary-General to make recommendations on this issue in his next report. The current standstill is unacceptable given that it is our responsibility as members of the Security Council to ensure that the measures taken by the United Nations are fully adapted to the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case at present.

France is convinced that the future of Kosovo is no longer an urgent Council matter; rather, it falls within the context of the European-Union-led political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, it is important that the parties demonstrate the highest level of proactive commitment. Beyond mere declarations of intent, we expect that all of the agreements reached will be effectively implemented as soon as possible, including the agreement on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which is a key aspect of the dialogue. We therefore call on the Kosovo and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts, particularly on that last point, in order to produce more concrete results in the months

to come. That is a subject that we will continue to follow closely.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains, in general, a prerequisite for their respective progress on the path to European integration, which was again encouraged at the European Council on 9 and 10 March.

After the episodes of unrest in recent months, we expect more than ever that all actors show responsibility and restraint, a point that is all the more important in view of the upcoming elections in Kosovo. France is convinced that the resurgence of nationalist discourse, sometimes tinged with community-based references, poses a threat to the stability of the region, to which the peoples of Kosovo and Serbia both aspire.

In that regard, the agreement recently reached at the local level as to the demolition of the Mitrovica wall is a positive example, showing that concrete solutions can be found to foster coexistence between communities, free from political provocation and any divisive rhetoric. The fact that the recent involvement of Serbian citizens living in Kosovo in the Serbian presidential election was not accompanied by any serious incidents, thanks to the work of the Kosovo and Serbian electoral institutions and the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is another encouraging development that we welcome. Lastly, President Thaçi's choice to favour an inclusive approach with regard to a possible transformation of the status of the Kosovo security forces is also one likely to avoid an escalation of tensions, which would be as unnecessary as it would be dangerous.

Continued efforts by Kosovo to consolidate the rule of law must also remain a priority. That includes the fight against radicalization in all of its forms. We welcome the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in that regard, both locally and within the global coalition against Da'esh.

Finally, I conclude my remarks by recalling France's commitment to the relationship of trust that we have traditionally maintained with Serbia and Kosovo, as well as our support for reconciliation in the region and the implementation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, allow me to point out that the French judiciary independently rendered a decision in the Haradinaj case. French authorities cannot comment on that judicial decision, but it should in no way be interpreted politically.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing. Likewise, I should like to thank the Minister of Justice of Serbia, Ms. Nela Kuburović, for her intervention. I take note of the statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Allow me to begin by stressing, as I have mentioned on other occasions, that Uruguay advocates for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal basis for a resolution of the situation in Kosovo. Strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is a fundamental principle of Uruguay's foreign policy.

We believe it is essential that the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade being facilitated by the European Union move forward and, in that regard, we express our full support for that process. The interruption in the dialogue and the delays in the implementation of the international agreements are a source of tensions and distrust in the region.

In view of the political situation that Kosovo currently faces, we encourage leaders to work in a constructive manner and to seek the speedy resumption of the Belgrade talks and the implementation of the agreements concluded. Progress on the commitments already made will contribute to the achievement of stability at the domestic and international levels, and to the improvement of the conditions and development of the people to their highest potential.

We firmly believe in the path of reconciliation. To that end, it is necessary to move toward truth and justice. Despite years of work, 1,664 cases of missing persons remain unsolved, and major questions still remain. It is imperative to make progress in that area. The families of the disappeared deserve to have access to information about the fate of their loved ones. It is a fundamental matter concerning the defence of human rights. Furthermore, addressing the situation of internally displaced persons is essential for reconciliation. Efforts by local officials to hamper returns are worrying.

Moreover, efforts should be made at the local level and in neighbouring countries to combat ethno-nationalist discourse and incitement to hatred

and resentment. Discrimination and ultranationalism have been the cause of great misfortune for humankind. Respect for the religious and cultural specificities of each community, as well as policies oriented towards minority groups, are essential to consolidate peace.

UNMIK undertakes important work for the population of Kosovo, via collaboration with the leaders of Pristina and Belgrade. UNMIK also works at the regional, municipal and community levels where, among other activities, it spearheads activities directed at minority groups and young people. I specifically wish to highlight the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, the theme of which was "The role of women in reconciliation: building peace and security in Kosovo", held on 15 March under the auspices of UNMIK. Uruguay believes that the participation of women at all levels is indispensable for the achievement of sustainable peace processes. Truth, justice, reconciliation, security, equal rights, guarantees and inclusive processes are the foundations of sustainable peace.

In addition to the work of UNMIK, I wish to recognize the role of the European Union as facilitator of the dialogues and as a cooperating partner, the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, as well as the support of the entire United Nations system.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.